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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
OFFICE OF NATIONAL ESTIMATES

23 June 1967

SECURITY CONDITIONS IN SOUTH KOREA

1. The risks involved in Vice President Humphrey's visit to the Seoul area and his attendance at the 1 July inauguration of ROK President Pak are twofold. Pak's domestic political opponents may use the occasion to demonstrate against his regime, creating a situation in which the safety of the Vice President might be jeopardized. More serious, it is possible that North Korean Communist agents will carry out violent attacks on Pak, members of his government, or on Vice President Humphrey himself.

2. Domestic Political Opponents. South Korea is presently experiencing considerable political tension. Members of the leading opposition party and anti-regime student elements have been angrily protesting alleged rigging of the 8 June legislative elections by the Pak government and its party machinery. The government has conceded that illegal tactics -- vote buying, open balloting, ballot box stuffing, police pressures, and the like -- were used in certain districts and has moved to right a few of these wrongs. But it has refused to consider opposition demands for new elections nationwide. A compromise of sorts, perhaps involving the resignation

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of a few high administration officials, seems likely. But it is also probable that before the dust is permitted to settle, some opposition elements will mount additional public protests and carry out plans for obstructing legislative business, including a boycott of the inaugural ceremonies.

3. Anti-regime protests by students, in Seoul and elsewhere, reached a peak of intensity last week, but have been terminated as a result of firm police action and the suspension of college classes by the government. If classes resume, however, additional student street demonstrations may take place.

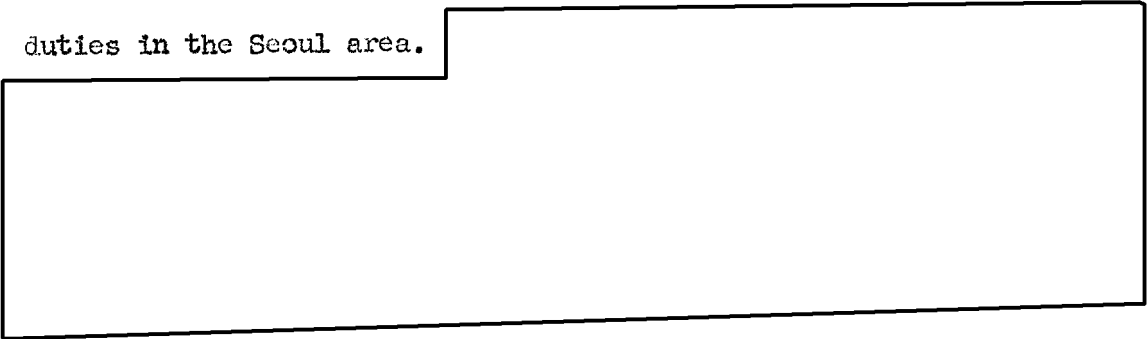
4. In sum, there is a possibility that Vice President Humphrey's visit will be marred by public protests of some sort against the Pak regime. It seems unlikely, however, that any demonstrations or other antics by the political opposition and its student allies would be carried out so as deliberately to embarrass or endanger the Vice President. There has been no hint that opposition leaders hold the US in any way responsible for the alleged election frauds. Moreover, in recent years, South Koreans have evidenced an unwillingness to wash dirty linen in front of foreign dignitaries; on the contrary, domestic factions have tended to submerge differences on occasions of international significance in the interest of preserving national prestige.

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5. In any case, we believe that South Korean security forces available in the Seoul area would be capable of controlling any demonstration by anti-regime elements. The National Police, who will have the main responsibility for the safety of the foreign guests, are tough and experienced in crowd control. So are the ROK Army contingents permanently assigned to internal security duties in the Seoul area.



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6. North Korean Communist Agents. In October 1966, on the occasion of President Johnson's trip to South Korea, we were able to dismiss the danger of violence by North Korean Communist agents with the notation that "their missions have not involved deliberate violence but rather intelligence collection and recruitment." (SNIE 40/50-66, para. 11) Since that time, the situation has changed markedly. For various reasons, some related to ROK participation in the Vietnam War, Pyongyang has stepped up its infiltration of agents southward, and more important, it has initiated a campaign of sporadic violence against UN forces in the

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DMZ area. North Korean agents are also attempting sabotage missions for the first time since the Korean Armistice. ^{1/} And the North Koreans have begun to infiltrate small teams of highly-trained agents to scout for likely guerrilla base areas in remote rural regions. ^{2/}

7. It is apparent, therefore, that North Korea is no longer disposed to refrain from acts of violence in the South; indeed, Pyongyang has evidently decided to accept the risks involved in shedding a limited amount of South Korean and US blood. Would Pyongyang take the added risk involved in any attempt to assassinate leaders of South Korea and the US? We are aware of several North Korean direct threats against the life of President Pak and the dispatch of occasional agent teams charged with this mission. The possibility of another Communist effort of this sort

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- ^{1/} One such effort, on 22 May just south of the DMZ, resulted in the destruction of two US infantry barracks with the loss of two men killed and nineteen wounded.
- ^{2/} Three such groups have been discovered by ROK security forces. Attempts to run them down have resulted in the deaths of thirteen ROKs and eight North Koreans; at least 29 North Koreans remain at large.

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during the inaugural period cannot be dismissed. The political gains for the North could be considerable; Pak provides the only real cement for whatever degree of political stability exists in South Korea. An attempt on Pak, of course, would endanger those notables, including the Vice President, in his vicinity.

8. It seems unlikely, however, that the Communists would focus an assassination effort on Mr. Humphrey. The political justification from the North Korean viewpoint would be much less compelling than that for an attack on Pak.

9. We cannot, of course, exclude the possibility of an assassination attempt by some Communist or other radical acting on his own or an attempt by a psychopath.

FOR THE BOARD OF NATIONAL ESTIMATES:

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